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Inspection of Eagle Pass and Laredo, Tex.

GALVESTON, TEX., October 6, 1899.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith the reports of my inspection of the stations at Eagle Pass and Laredo, Tex., under the direction of acting assistant surgeons, Lea Hume and H. J. Hamilton. * * *

Respectfully, yours,

C. T. PECKHAM,
Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.

Inspection of Eagle Pass.

GALVESTON, TEX., October 5, 1899.

SIR: In consonance with orders contained in Bureau letter (J. W. B.) of the 20th ultimo, I have the honor to state that I started from Galveston, Tex., September 26, and arrived at Eagle Pass, Tex., September 27, 1899, at 5.20 p. m.

September 28, at 9 o'clock a. m., I went to the office of the collector of customs, Mr. C. C. Drake. The collector was in his office. He informed me that Act. Asst. Surg. Lea Hume was at Presidio, Tex., 600 miles up the Rio Grande. The nearest point to him by railroad was 200 miles from the smallpox camp, and this distance would have to be made on horseback.

The collector informed me that Dr. Hume had reported to him that there were at least 1,500 cases of smallpox in Presidio County. The collector said he had exceeded his authority, but he had induced the sheriff of the county to forbid the opening of the public schools until the epidemic of smallpox had been stamped out.

The collector said that along the Rio Grande, where there were villages or cities on opposite sides of the river, Mexicans who had been exposed to smallpox were constantly crossing into Texas. Some had crossed in whom smallpox was in the eruptive stage, and were walking about the village into which they had come. They were returned to Mexico unless near a smallpox camp or pesthouse, in which case they were cared for on the Texas side of the river. He had 10 guards stationed along the river, 2 at each of 5 towns on the Texas side of the river. There were 2 at Presidio, 2 at Reidoso, 2 at Condalaria, 2 at San Antonio, and 2 at Pinto Canyon. These were mounted guards, and rode every day from 15 to 20 miles above and the same distance below the towns. They furnish their own horses and feed for them. They are paid \$3.50 per day.

The collector has 4 guards at Eagle Pass, Tex.; 1 at the railroad bridge, 1 at the footbridge, and 2 at the camp. He also has 1 guard at Del Rio, making in all 15 guards. The guard at Del Rio is a Mexican by birth, but an American citizen, and receives \$2 per day.

Mr. Jenkins has charge of the train inspection during Dr. Hume's absence. He has no pay from the Service. He is an intelligent appearing man, and has had a great deal of experience in this kind of work while with Dr. Hume. I think he is a customs inspector; at least he wears that uniform.

The collector of customs has the meals sent to the camp at the rate of 25 cents per meal. Many days there will be no one in the camp except the 2 workmen. If the meals were cooked at the camp it would necessitate the hiring of a cook and an assistant, the purchase of a camp cooking equipment, and the building of a storeroom that could be locked. The water used at the camp has to be brought a mile in barrels.

The camp presented a neat appearance. The tents were clean, and there were no piles of débris or fæcal matter anywhere near them. I understand that the State legislature, at its last session, appropriated \$10,000 with which to build and equip permanent barracks, but the governor vetoed the bill. * * *

The collector states that the Mexicans are careful to report to him every case of contagious disease. They do not see why American citizens who have been in Mexico and have not been long enough away from infected districts to warrant the inspectors in admitting them to go where they wish in the States, should not be cared for on the Texas side of the river, rather than to return them to Mexico. At one time passengers would leave the train, on the Mexican side of the river, at Ciudad Porfirio Diaz, and hire a hack to take them and their baggage to Del Rio, about 20 miles up the river. There they would cross by ferry, go to the Southern Pacific Railroad and take the train going east. A guard was stationed at Del Rio and 20 cases of smallpox were turned back on the train. Three cases were found in the street broken out with smallpox and were sent to camp. Some people from districts infected with yellow fever, who had not been long enough away from such places to be given liberty to go where they wished, were turned back.

He said there was smallpox in Las Moras, Morales, and Ciudad Porfirio Diaz, Mexico. To sum up, I found that the collector, Mr. C. C. Drake and Dr. Hume are both on the alert, and doing all they can to prevent the introduction of any contagious disease into Texas. I impressed upon the collector's mind the necessity of informing the Bureau at once of any change in the guards in his district.

Respectfully yours,

C. T. PECKHAM,
Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.

Inspection of Laredo.

GALVESTON, TEX., October 6, 1899.

SIR: In accordance with orders contained in Bureau letter (J. W. B.) of the 20th ultimo, I have the honor to state that I left Eagle Pass, Tex., September 28, 1899, and arrived in Laredo, Tex., September 30, 1899, at 6.30 a. m. At 9 o'clock a. m. I went to the collector's office. Mr. Haynes, the collector, arrived at his office at 9.30 a. m., and Dr. Hamilton came at 9.45 a. m. Dr. Hamilton impressed me as the proper man for his position. He has 6 attendants under his control.

H. McClelland has the guarding of the bridge for teams during the day and Benavides at night.

There is a ferry which takes passengers from Mexico to the Texas side of the river. These boats are only allowed to run during the day. Chamberlain guards the ferry during the day, and the night guard at the bridge can see that the boats do not cross during the night. M. Idar guards the railroad bridge and disinfects the baggage when necessary with formaldehyd. The building for this purpose is near the Texas end of the bridge.

If a car load of dunnage is to be disinfected, Dr. Hamilton has the privilege of using the steam cylinder on the Mexican side. Eduardo Ruis is cook at the camp. He furnished his own kitchen outfit. Luis Martinez is scavenger at the camp.

Dr. Hamilton receives from the United States consuls at Tampico, Vera Cruz, and City of Mexico, daily, a list of the names of the persons who